

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IS
SUBJECT: ISRAEL OBSERVES THIRTY YEARS OF STATEHOOD

1. ISRAEL CELEBRATED THIRTY YEARS OF STATEHOOD THIS PAST WEEKEND IN A MOOD LESS BOISTEROUS AND MORE REFLECTIVE THAN ON ITS PREVIOUS LANDMARK ANNIVERSARIES. THERE WERE FEWER FLAGS AND THE REVELRY SEEMED A SHADE MORE MUTED ALTHOUGH THIS WAS THE MOST JOYOUS CELEBRATION SINCE THE 1973 WAR. EXPECTATIONS HAD RUN HIGH THAT THE THIRTIETH WOULD BE A MAJOR EVENT, BUT IN FACT, THE OCCASION WAS SOMETHING OF AN ANTI-CLIMAX. THE ANTICIPATION OF A MAJOR EVENT HAD BEEN REINFORCED BY THE LIKUD ELECTION VICTORY, SPELLING THE FIRST TURNOVER OF THE RULING LABOR PARTY IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY. THE ASCENDENCY TO POWER OF THE COUN
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TRY'S
MOST NATIONALIST ELEMENTS PORTENDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD MAKE THE MOST OF THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY WITH A MACHO OUTPOURING WHICH WOULD ECLIPSE PREVIOUS INDEPENDENCE DAY OBSERVANCES. INDEED, BEGIN INITIALLY PROPOSED A FULL-BLOWN MILITARY PARADE. HOWEVER, THE IDEA WAS POORLY RECEIVED BY THE PUBLIC AND POLITICIANS ALIKE, WHO FELT IT WAS SINGULARLY

INAPPROPRIATE TO THE TIMES. BEGIN THEN BOWED TO THE CLAMOR AND SETTLED FOR A MILITARY REVIEW AT THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY STADIUM, TO INCLUDE A MARCH-PAST BY VETERANS OF THE PRE-STATE UNDERGROUND ORGANIZATIONS.

2. EVENTS OF THE PAST YEAR, BEGINNING WITH THE KNESSET ELECTION UPSET AND INCLUDING, OF COURSE, THE SADAT VISIT TENDED TO OVERSHADOW THE OCCASION. PARTICULARLY THE SADAT VISIT WAS HAILED AS ONE OF THE MOST DRAMATIC EVENTS IN THE REGION SINCE ISRAEL'S BIRTH AND PRODUCED AS MUCH EUPHORIA (ALBEIT SHORT-LIVED) AS THE SIX-DAY WAR VICTORY. IN THE INTERVENING SIX MONTHS IT HAS LOST ONLY A LITTLE OF ITS LANDMARK QUALITIES IN THE THINKING OF ISRAELIS. A MERE ROUND-NUMBER ANNIVERSARY COULD NEVER TOP THAT.

3. THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE OBSERVANCE WAS A UNIQUELY BEAUTIFUL AND MOVING SPECIAL CONCERT OF THE ISRAEL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA, UNDER THE BATON OF ZUBIN MEHTA AT THE FOOT OF DAVID'S TOWER OUTSIDE THE WALL OF OLD JERUSALEM, FEATURING LEONTYNE PRINCE, ISAAC STERN, JEAN-PIERRE RAMPAL, AND M. ROSTROPOVITCH. ALSO MARKING THE OCCASION WERE OTHER CONCERTS, FIREWORKS, THE TV COVERAGE OF THE AMNY "SALUTES TO ISRAEL" AND CELEBRATIONS AROUND THE WORLD AND A MILITARY REVIEW, THAT REVIEW, AT HEBREW UNIVERSITY STADIUM, WAS ESPECIALLY WELL-ORGANIZED. A LAPSE AT THE END MARRED THE OTHERWISE ORDERLINESS AND PRECISION OF THE CEREMONY AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE THOUGHTFUL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SPECTATORS WHEN WHAT WAS TO HAVE BEEN A MARCH-PAST BY UNDERGROUND ARMY VETERANS TO CONCLUDE THE SHOW, DISSOLVED INTO A MILLING THROG BENEATH THE REVIEWING STAND THROWING FLOWERS AT PRIME MINISTER BEGIN AND PRESIDENT KATZIR. THE CONFUSION, HOWEVER, DID NOT DIMINISH THE MOOD OF WARM AFFECTION AND EMOTIONAL SATISFACTION WIDELY SHARED BY AUDIENCE AND PARTICIPANTS. DESPITE A SPECTACULAR FLY-PAST OF F-15'S AND KFIRS AND THE STATIC DISPLAY OF THE NEW "MERKAVA" TANK, THIS WAS A MODEST MILITARY SHOW.

4. IN GENERAL THE CONTRACT WITH THE WILD CELEBRATIONS AND HEADY DISPLAYS OF MILITARY PROWESS DURING THE TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARIES WAS STRIKING. THE MILITARY PARADE WAS CONFINED TO A STADIUM AND SEATING WAS LIMITED. EVEN ATTENDANCE AT THE OUTDOOR JERUSALEM CONCERT REQUIRED A TICKET. MORE THAN THE USUAL NUMBER OF ISRAELIS SPENT THE HOLIDAY BEFORE THEIR TV SETS WHICH PRESENTED AN UNUSUALLY RICH FARE, INCLUDING THE REASSURING DISPLAY OF SOLIDARITY BY DIASPORA COMMUNITIES. THUS THE OCCASION DID PROVIDE A BRIEF RESPITE FROM THE POLITICAL WARS, THE DEBATE OVER PEACE AND THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL

TENSIONS. FOR THE ISRAELI PUBLIC IT WAS A THERAPEUTIC
INTERVAL, ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO PONDER THE MEANING
OF ISRAEL'S REBIRTH AND TO ASSESS THE EXTENT TO WHICH
ZIONIST IDEALS HAVE BEEN FULFILLED.
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